

## *Access to Justice Commission Members*

### **Professor Douglas Blaze, Chair**

Professor Doug Blaze, who received a J.D. summa cum laude degree from Georgetown University, was appointed Dean of the University of Tennessee College of Law in 2008. He joined the faculty in 1993 as Director of Clinical Programs. He has also been a member of the law faculty at Arizona State University where he helped establish a community-based legal service clinic and practiced with the firm of Fennemore Craig, also in Arizona, where his practice involved both commercial and tort litigation. Professor Blaze is a member and former chair of the Board of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services and is also very active on various bar committees including the Tennessee Bar Association Access to Justice Committee and the Knoxville Bar Association Access to Justice Initiative. Through the National Institute for Trial Advocacy, Professor Blaze conducts trainings in professional skills for law firms and legal service organizations around the country including trial skills training for Tennessee's legal service program advocates at the annual Statewide Equal Justice Conference. Professor Blaze has received numerous honors and awards, including the prestigious Thomas Jefferson Prize from the University of Tennessee; the Bass, Berry & Sims Award for Outstanding Service to the Bench and Bar; the Harold Warner Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Carden Institutional Service Award. And for his efforts to promote equal access to justice in Tennessee, Professor Blaze received the B. Riney Green Award in 2003.

### **Gail Vaughn Ashworth**

Gail Vaughn Ashworth is a founding member of Wiseman Ashworth Law Group PLC. She is a 1983 graduate of Vanderbilt Law School and holds B.S., summa cum laude, (1977) and M.A. (1979) degrees in Music Education and Special Education from Tennessee Technological University. She is a Past President of the Tennessee Bar Association (2009) and served as General Counsel of the TBA from 1999-2006. Ms. Ashworth was recently appointed to the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission (2013- current). Ms. Ashworth Chaired the Tennessee Legal Community Foundation in 2010 and the 2011 Legal Aid Society/Nashville Pro Bono Annual Campaign for Justice. She Co-Chaired the Tennessee Supreme Court Jury Reform Commission (1997-1999), serves on the Steering Committee of the TBA Leadership Law Program (2004-current) which she Co-Chaired the inaugural year, and serves on the ABA/TIPS Leadership Academy Task Force (inaugural year 2006-current). She is a former President of the Nashville Bar Association (1997) and served as the elected NBA delegate in the ABA House of Delegates from 2000-2006. Ms. Ashworth is also a member of the Marion Griffin chapter of LAW and of TLAW. She is a fellow of the American, Tennessee and Nashville Bar Foundations (Trustee 2005-current; General Counsel 2013-current), as well as a fellow of the ABA/YLD, the TBA/YLD and the NBA/YLD. She is a former member of the State of Tennessee Registry of Election Finance (Chair, 1996), a member of the Board of Directors of Tennessee Justice Center, Inc. (Chair, 2006-2008), serves on the Board of Directors of Sister Cities Nashville, Inc. (President 2014) and is a member of the Medical Ethics Committee at Centennial Medical Center in Nashville. Ms. Ashworth is a faculty member and student mentor for the ABA/TIPS/ABOTA National Trial Academy at the National Judicial College. She is a Rule 31 Certified Mediator, is a founding member of the Tennessee Academy of Mediators & Arbitrators, has practiced civil litigation in Nashville, Tennessee since 1983 and is listed in Best Lawyers in America (1995-current).

## **Marcia (Marcy) M. Eason**

Marcy Eason, a Member of Miller & Martin PLLC, a regional full service law firm, is located in their Chattanooga office where she was one of the first female partners named at the firm. She concentrates her practice on civil litigation with an emphasis on commercial litigation, lender liability and products liability. She has been involved in complex litigation since 1985, including failed banks, products liability and class actions. Ms. Eason has an AV rating in Martindale Hubble, and has been listed as a Super Lawyer since 2007. Marcy Eason has served as past President of the Tennessee Bar Association and Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women, and Member of the Executive Council for National Conference of Bar Presidents. She is a member and life fellow of the American Bar Foundation, and Fellow of Chattanooga Bar Foundation and Tennessee Bar Foundation, and Sustaining Fellow for National Conference of Bar Presidents. Ms. Eason has served the Commission on Access to Justice as a member of the Unmet Needs Committee, and more recently has been appointed to serve on the Commission on Access to Justice. Ms. Eason is an inaugural member of the Hall of Fame Pro Bono Attorneys, honored by Legal Aid of East Tennessee in 2011. Ms. Eason has served in several capacities with United Way of Chattanooga, and served in her community in a number of chair capacities including for Chattanooga's Kids on the Block, and AIM Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She received the Alumni Award, Private Sector Achievement, University of Houston Law Center.

## **David R. Esquivel**

David R. Esquivel is a partner at the law firm of Bass, Berry & Sims. His practice focuses on commercial litigation and internal investigations in the areas of antitrust, consumer financial services, and securities laws. David currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Trial Practice Committee for the ABA Section of Antitrust Law. He has significant trial experience, representing the firm's clients before federal court juries, state court judges, and administrative bodies. Since 2005, David has been a member of the team that conducts the regulatory audit of the New York Stock Exchange. David served four years as chair of the firm's Lateral Hiring Committee. David maintains an active pro bono practice. In 2005, he was lead trial counsel for five Salvadoran plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit brought against the former Vice-Minister of Defense of El Salvador. The plaintiffs were tortured or had family members killed by the Salvadoran military during the early 1980s. After a three-week trial, the jury awarded the plaintiffs \$6 million in compensatory and punitive damages. The verdict was upheld on appeal, and was the first occasion in which a jury in the United States had found a defendant liable for crimes against humanity on a theory of command responsibility. In 2005, for his work on the Salvadoran case, David was named the Harris A. Gilbert "Pro Bono Attorney of the Year" by the Tennessee Bar Association (TBA). David currently serves as chair of the Board of Directors for Conexion Americas, a non-profit that promotes the economic, social, and political integration of Latino immigrants in Middle Tennessee. David served two years as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Justice Center. He is a member of the Advisory Council for the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, and is completing a two-year term as Chair of the TBA's Access to Justice Committee. He was a member of the TBA's Leadership Law Class of 2007 and the Leadership Nashville Class of 2011. David is the son of Cuban immigrant parents and grew up in DeSoto, Texas. He obtained his bachelor of arts degree from Duke University in 1992 and graduated with high honors from Duke Law School in 1997. In law school, David was an Articles Editor for the Duke Law Journal and a member of the Moot Court Board. After law school, David served as a law clerk to Judge Sam J. Ervin, III, Circuit Judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. David practiced law in Washington, DC for two years before joining Bass, Berry & Sims as an associate in 2001.

## **J. Houston Gordon**

Houston Gordon is a practicing attorney in Covington, Tennessee. Prior to establishing his law practice, Mr. Gordon served as the Assistant District Attorney General for the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and the County Attorney for Tipton County. He obtained his bachelor of science in liberal arts from University of Tennessee at Martin before attending the University of Tennessee College of Law. Mr. Gordon received his LLM in Taxation from George Washington University National Law Center in Washington, D.C. Mr. Gordon spent four years on active military duty with United State Army during which he was awarded with the Meritorious Service Medal in 1973. He has served the legal profession through his prior memberships on the Advisory Committee to Tennessee Supreme Court Rules, the Commission on Rules of Civil and Appellate Procedure, and on the Board of Advisors for the Tennessee Bar Association Young Lawyers Division. In addition to his professional service, Mr. Gordon has belonged to the Dean's Alumni Advisory Council for the Tennessee College of Law, the Board of Governors for the UT National Alumni Association, the Development Council for UT Martin, and actively supports St. Jude's Research Hospital and the Tipton Fine Arts Council. Mr. Gordon has served as a visiting lecturer at many law schools including the University of South Carolina, the University of Tennessee, and Memphis State University. He is a member of the American Trial Lawyers Association, the Tennessee Trial Lawyers Association, the Memphis-Shelby County Bar Association, the Tipton County Bar Association, and the Tennessee Bar Association. Mr. Gordon is also a Lifetime Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

## **George T. (Buck) Lewis**

Buck Lewis is a shareholder in the Memphis office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz PC where he serves as chair of the Appellate Practice litigation group. He focuses his practice on complex business, personal injury, insurance coverage, Consumer Protection Act, health care and class action litigation. Mr. Lewis was President of the Tennessee Bar in 2008-2009 and made *Justice 4 All* the theme of his presidency, tirelessly promoting systemic changes; the adoption of law firm pro bono policies; and greater bar pro bono service and support for access to justice organizations across the state to help address the legal services gap. The TBA's access to justice campaign won the ABA's Harrison Tweed Award for the best access to justice initiative in the country. He has served as President of the Memphis Bar Foundation and as member of the Board of Directors of Memphis Area Legal Services and the America Bar Association House of Delegates; he is also on the Honor Role of the America Bar Association Torts and Insurance Practice Section. Mr. Lewis is a Fellow of the Tennessee and Memphis Bar Foundations as well as the American Bar Foundation and a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America. He has been extensively honored for his public service work. Mr. Lewis has been the recipient of: the Tennessee Supreme Court Outstanding Service Award; the University of Tennessee College of Law Outstanding Service Award; the Memphis Bar Association W. J. Michael Cody Pro Bono Award; and the University Of Tennessee College Of Law Alumni Leadership Award.

## **Ann Jarvis Pruitt**

### **Sharon R. Ryan**

Sharon Ryan joined International Paper in 1988 as an attorney in the Land and Timber/Forest Products Division. In 1992, she was named vice president and general counsel of Masonite Corporation, an International Paper subsidiary. In 1997, Sharon was named general counsel - Building Materials Group, adding Wood Products and Decorative Products to her Masonite responsibilities. She became general counsel of Consumer Packaging and Corporate Sales & Marketing in 2000, and, in 2005, expanded her responsibilities to include IP's Papers businesses and Wood Products business. Sharon was promoted to associate general counsel - Corporate Law in 2006, and, in 2009 assumed the additional role of Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer. She was appointed vice president in February 2011 and, in May 2011, was also named acting general counsel and corporate secretary. Sharon was promoted to senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary November 1, 2011. Prior to joining International Paper, she was a real estate attorney with Baker, Smith & Mills in Dallas, Texas. She received her undergraduate degree from George Washington University in 1981. In 1985, she received her JD degree from Boston College Law School where she was an editor for the Boston College Law Review.

## **D. Billye Sanders**

Billye Sanders is President and Chief Manager of Sunshine Enterprises, LLC, a real estate investment company. She is formally a partner at Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis, LLP where she concentrated her practice on administrative law, especially public utilities regulation, land use and state and local government relations. She also has experience with mergers and acquisitions, financial institutions and corporate transactional work. Her clients ranged from Fortune 500 companies and municipalities to start-up companies. Ms. Sanders has been recognized in the *Nashville Business Journal's* "Best of the Bar." Prior to joining Waller, Ms. Sanders served as Deputy General Counsel of the Tennessee Public Service Commission. At the Commission, she managed the Legal Division; represented the public interest in public utilities litigation; and handled a variety of employment matters. Before joining the Commission, she served as Assistant Vice President and Legal Counsel for United Southern Bank of Nashville. Ms. Sanders is a Commissioner on the Metropolitan Davidson County Civil Service Commission, Chair of the Board of the General Alumni Association of Fisk University, Inc., member of the Board of Trustees of Fisk University, Board member of the Baptist Healing Trust and an Advisory Board Member of First Tennessee Bank. She is a member and former board member of Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, the Nashville Bar Foundation; Napier Lobby Bar Association; Lawyers Association for Women; Energy Bar Association; Leadership Nashville Alumni Association; CABLE and Vanderbilt Law School Alumni. Ms. Sanders has also served on the boards of United Way of Middle Tennessee; Inroads Nashville; Nashville YWCA; Nashville Public Library and Nashville Public Radio. She is an emeritus member of the Harry Phillips American Inn of Court.

## **Anthony Alan Seaton**

Tony Seaton has over 30 years of professional experience in the areas of Workers Compensation, Social Security Disability and Personal Injury. As a native of East Tennessee and a graduate of both East Tennessee State University, and The University of Memphis School of Law, he has dedicated his career to helping the folks of East Tennessee and surrounding areas. Tony is a Board Certified Civil Trial Specialist by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. He is AV rated by Martindale-Hubbell and has the highest possible AVVO rating reflecting his legal experience, professional achievements and industry recognition. Among his many professional affiliations, Tony is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association, the Washington County Bar Association, the Board of Governors of the Tennessee Association of Justice and a founding committee member of Access to Justice of the Washington County Bar Association, a pioneering effort to extend legal representation to those in need.